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7 CFR Ch. XIV (1-1-01 Edition)

(2) Land shall only be considered eligible for enrollment in the WRP if the Department determines, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, that:

(i) Such land maximizes wildlife benefits and wetland values and functions;

(ii) The likelihood of the successful restoration of such land and the resultant wetland values merit inclusion of such land in the program, taking into consideration the cost of such restoration; and

(iii) Such land meets the criteria of paragraph (d)(3) of this section.

(3) The following land may be eligible for enrollment in the WRP, which land may be identified by the Department pursuant to regulations and implementing policies pertaining to wetland conservation found at 7 CFR part 12, as:

(i) Wetlands farmed under natural conditions, farmed wetlands, prior converted cropland, commenced conversion wetlands, farmed wetland pastures, and lands substantially altered by flooding so as to develop wetland functions and values;

(ii) Former or degraded wetlands that occur on lands that have been used or are currently being used for the production of food and fiber, including rangeland and forest production lands, where the hydrology has been significantly degraded or modified and will be substantially restored;

(iii) Riparian areas along streams or other waterways that link or, after restoring the riparian area, will link wetlands which are protected by an easement or other device or circumstance that achieves the same objectives as an easement;

(iv) Land adjacent to the restored wetland which would contribute significantly to wetland functions and values including buffer areas, wetland creations, and non-cropped natural wetlands, but not more than the State Conservationist, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, determines is necessary for such contribution;

(v) Other wetlands that would not otherwise be eligible but would significantly add to the wetland functions and values; and

(vi) Wetlands that have been restored under a private, State, or Federal restoration program with an easement or deed restriction with a duration of less than 30 years.

(4) To be enrolled in the program, eligible land must be configured in a size and with boundaries that allow for the efficient management of the area for easement purposes and otherwise promote and enhance program objectives.

(e) *Ineligible land.* The following land is not eligible for enrollment in the WRP:

(1) Converted wetlands if the conversion was commenced after December 23, 1985;

(2) Land that contains timber stands established under a CRP contract or pasture land established to trees under a CRP contract.

(3) Lands owned by an agency of the United States;

(4) Land subject to an easement or deed restriction with a duration of 30 years or more prohibiting the production of agricultural commodities; and,

(5) Lands where implementation of restoration practices would be futile due to on-site or off-site conditions.

(f) *Enrollment of CRP lands.* Land subject to an existing CRP contract may be enrolled into the WRP only if the land and landowner meet the requirements of this part, and the enrollment is requested by the landowner and agreed to by the Department. To enroll in WRP, the CRP contract for the property shall be terminated or otherwise modified subject to such terms and conditions as are mutually agreed upon by the Farm Service Agency and the landowner.

[60 FR 28514, June 1, 1995; 60 FR 33034, June 26, 1995. Redesignated and amended at 61 FR 42141, Aug. 14, 1996]

§ 1467.5 Application procedures.

(a) *Application for participation.* To apply for enrollment, a landowner must submit an Application for Participation in the WRP. The application must be submitted during an announced period for such submissions.

(b) *Preliminary agency actions.* By filing an Application for Participation, the landowner consents to a Department representative entering upon the

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land for purposes of assessing the wetland functions and values, and for other activities such as the development of the preliminary WRPO that are necessary or desirable for the Department to make offers of enrollment. The landowner is entitled to accompany a Department representative on any site visits.

(c) *Voluntary reduction in compensation.* In order to enhance the probability of enrollment in WRP, a landowner may voluntarily offer to accept a lesser payment than is being offered by the Department.

[60 FR 28514, June 1, 1995. Redesignated and amended at 61 FR 42141, 42143, Aug. 14, 1996]

§ 1467.6 Establishing priority for enrollment of properties in WRP.

(a) The Department shall place priority on the enrollment of those lands that will maximize wildlife values (especially related to enhancing habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife); have the least likelihood of re-conversion and loss of these wildlife values at the end of the WRP enrollment period; and that involve State, local, or other partnership matching funds and participation.

(b) *Ranking considerations.* Based on applications for participation, the State Conservationist, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State Technical Committee, will rank properties based on: estimated costs of restoration and easement acquisition, availability of matching funds, significance of wetland functions and values, estimated success of restoration measures, and the duration of a proposed easement with permanent easements being given priority over non-permanent easements.

(c) The Department may place higher priority on certain geographic regions of the State where restoration of wetlands may better achieve Department State and regional goals and objectives.

(d) Notwithstanding any limitation of this part, the State Conservationist may enroll eligible lands at any time in order to encompass total wetland areas subject to multiple ownership or otherwise to achieve program objectives. Similarly, the State Conserva-

tionist may, at any time, exclude otherwise eligible lands if the participation of the adjacent landowners is essential to the successful restoration of the wetlands and those adjacent landowners are unwilling to participate.

[60 FR 28514, June 1, 1995. Redesignated and amended at 61 FR 42141, 42142, Aug. 14, 1996]

§ 1467.7 Enrollment of easements.

(a) *Offers of enrollment.* Based on the priority ranking, the Department will notify an affected landowner of tentative acceptance into the program for which the landowner has 15 calendar days to sign a letter of intent to continue. Department will select lands to maximize environmental benefits per expenditure of Federal funds.

(b) *Effect of letter of intent to continue (enrollment).* An offer of tentative acceptance into the program does not bind the Department or the United States to acquire an easement, nor does it bind the landowner to convey an easement or agree to WRPO activities. However, receipt of an executed letter of intent to continue will authorize the Department to proceed.

(c) *Acceptance of offer of enrollment.* A contract will be presented by the Department to the landowner, which will describe the easement area; the easement terms and conditions; and other terms and conditions for participation that may be required by the Department. A landowner accepts enrollment in the WRP by signing contract.

(d) *Effect of the acceptance of the offer.* After the contract is executed by Department and the landowner, the Department will proceed with various easement acquisition activities, which may include conducting a survey of the easement area, securing necessary subordination agreements, procuring title insurance, and conducting other activities necessary to record the easement or implement the WRPO.

(e) *Withdrawal of offers.* Prior to execution by the United States and the landowner of the contract, the Department may withdraw its offer anytime due to availability of funds, inability to clear title, or other reasons. The offer to the landowner shall be void if not executed by the landowner within the time specified. The date of the offer